



**MAY 23, 2024 11:00 a.m. - WORKSHOP and CITY MANAGER'S BRIEFING**

**CITY GOVERNMENT**

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS**

**OF THE MAYOR AND ALDERMEN**

**SAVANNAH, GEORGIA**

The work session and City Manager's briefing was held at **11:02 a.m.**, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Media Room. **Mayor Johnson** called the meeting to order and recognized **Alderman Leggett** to offer a prayer.

**PRESENT:**

Mayor Van R. Johnson, II, Presiding  
 Alderman Detric Leggett, District 2  
 Alderwoman Alicia Miller Blakely, At-Large, Post 2  
 Alderwoman Bernetta B. Lanier, District 1  
 Alderwoman Linda Wilder-Bryan, District 3 - Vice Chair  
 Alderman Nick Palumbo, District 4 - Chairman  
 Alderwoman Dr. Estella Edwards Shabazz, District 5 - Mayor Pro Tem

**ABSENT:**

Alderwoman Carolyn H. Bell, At-Large, Post 1  
 Alderman Kurtis Purtee, District 6

**ALSO, PRESENT:**

City Manager Joseph A. Melder  
 Chief of Staff Daphanie Williams  
 City Attorney Bates Lovett  
 Clerk of Council Mark Massey  
 Deputy Clerk of Council Margaret Fox

**Workshop Agenda Items**

[1. Civic Center Development Update](#)

Mayor Johnson began the meeting by indicating no decisions will be made today on the future development of the Civic Center site. After today's presentation, City Council will ask City Manager Melder for three or more options for consideration of the Civic Center site. The options will be in the form of Resolutions. City Council will review/consider the options at the end of June.

PRESENTED by City Manager Melder, The Collaborative Firm President Michael Hightower, Christian Sottile of Sottile & Sottile, Planning & Urban Design Senior Director Bridget Lidy, and Information and Public Affairs Chief Bret Bell.

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz presided over the remainder of the meeting.

Following the presentation, there were discussions, questions, and comments from City Council Members concerning the total project and each option. Below are listed some of the major comments and concerns of Council Members:

- RFP process and the cost if no RFP was initiated.
- An explanation of trust and tithing lots of the squares.
- The current presentation versus the last time Sottile & Sottile discussed this project.
- A request for a more definitive timeframe for each option.
- Other possible locations in Savannah for a new Civic Center site that allows residents to walk to the location.
- Parking; consider options other than underground parking.
- The Oglethorpe Plan and re-establishing the initial squares and the development of affordable housing.
- Profitability of the MLK Arena and what would be equitable for residents. Option 3 might be the most equitable.
- SPLOST 8 was discussed as a means of financing, but SPLOST 8 funds should be used for the City's infrastructure.
- Residents would like to have space for non-profits and arts.
- Recognition was given to Ald. Leggett for his diligence and engagement during the process and during public meetings with residents.
- The current use of the facility (arena), can be used as a secondary venue.
- No options available without the Oglethorpe Plan involved.
- Consider how the final decision will impact residents in the future.

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz summarized the Council Member's comments and she thanked the presenters for the information and Council Members for their input.

City Manager Melder indicated the name and legacy of the MLK Jr. name will not be lost, whatever happens to the facility. More input from Council Members is welcomed, staff will work on more definitive timelines in place, there is room for more equity in all the options, and is a 4th option available.

City Manager Melder will prepare 3 options in Resolution form for Council Members to consider. Each option will include: 1.) the option from a planning perspective; and 2.) define what equity means in each option during this process in order to bring back new or better options.

All information is located on the City's website, [savannahga.gov/civic center](http://savannahga.gov/civic-center), and comments from residents can be submitted to [planning@savannahga.gov](mailto:planning@savannahga.gov).

[2. Closed Executive Session: Litigation, Personnel, and Real Estate](#)

City Manager Melder and City Attorney Lovett indicated there was no need for an Executive Session.

[3. City Manager's Agenda Review](#)

By consensus of Council Members, there was no Agenda Review.

There was no action taken during the Workshop.

Mayor Pro Tem Dr. Shabazz adjourned the workshop at 12:49 p.m.

The video recording of the Workshop can be found by copying and inserting the link below in your url:

<https://savannahgovtv.viebit.com/player.php?hash=BlhgwiVadzGpN5wH>

Mark Massey, Clerk of Council

**Date Minutes Approved:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

